

REMARKS**In the Written Description**

The written description has been amended on page 8 in the second full paragraph to make reference to the proper figure. Originally, Figure 6 was referred to clearly by mistake, as there is no Figure 6, when in fact Figure 4 should have been referenced.

Claim 11

The indication that claim 11 would be allowable if rewritten to include the limitations of claims 1, 6, 7, 8 and 9 is acknowledged with appreciation. Claim 11 has been amended and includes all the essential limitations of claims 1, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 11.

Accordingly, claim 11 as amended is believed to define patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance.

Claim 18

The indication that claim 18 would be allowable if rewritten to include the limitations of claims 13, 15, and 16 is acknowledged with appreciation. Claim 18 has been amended and includes all the essential limitations of claims 13, 15, 16 and 18.

Accordingly, claim 18 as amended is believed to define patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance.

§ 103 Rejection, Claims 1-10, 12, and 13-17

The applicant respectively disagrees with the contention that claims 1-10, 12, and 13-17 are unpatentable as being obvious over Flask et al (5,928,011). The applicant further suggests that the Examiner has failed to establish a prima facie case of obviousness, as there is no suggestion or motivation in Flask et al. or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify Flask et al. in the manner posited by the Examiner. The applicant respectfully contends that it is only through hindsight based on the applicant's claimed invention and disclosure that the modifications suggested by the Examiner to Flask et al. be made to render the applicant's invention as being obvious over Flask et al..

In Claim 1, a connector assembly 10 has a slide mechanism 18 having an arm 24 with a lock rail 88 and a bayonet slot 78 in the arm. The first connector body 12

has a mounting slot 56 and a channel 20 for releasably receiving the arm of the slide mechanism 18. A second connector body 14 has a mounting tab 94 to be releasably received in the mounting slot 56 of the first connector body 12 to connect the first connector body 12 and second connector body 14 together. The second connector body 14 also has a lock tab 100 which in assembly cooperates with the lock rail 88 and engages the lock rail to prevent separation of the second connector body 14 and first connector body 12. A third connector body 16 has a bayonet 112 to be received in the bayonet slot 78 of the slide mechanism 18 so that the third connector body 16 is releasably connected to the first connector body 12 when the arm of the slide mechanism 18 is disposed in the channel 20 of the first connector body 12. Claim 1 therefore has three connector bodies 12, 14 and 16 connected to one another through the assistance of a slide mechanism 18.

Whereas the applicant's connector assembly 10 comprises three connector bodies 12, 14 and 16 being connected to one another through the assistance of a slide mechanism 18, Flask et al. only shows two connector bodies 10, 14 being connected to one another by a slide mechanism 12. The applicant contends that nowhere in Flask et al. is there mention of a third connector body, specifically a connector body designated by reference numeral 14 in the applicant's disclosure, which has a mounting tab 94 constructed to be releasably received in a mounting slot 56 of a first connector body 12 to facilitate connecting the first connector body 12 and the second connector body 14 together. In fact, there is no mention or suggestion that a mounting slot or mounting tab be incorporated into Flask et al.. Rather, the applicant contends that Flask et al. "teaches away" from connecting three connector bodies together, as evidenced by saying that the slide mechanism 12 may be used to mechanically assist the mating of a first connector body 10 to a second connector body 14 (see column 3, lines 30-32). Nowhere is mention given to introducing a third connector body, other than the applicant's disclosure.

Further, there is no mention in Flask et al. of a lock tab 100 or a lock rail 88 wherein during assembly a lock tab 100 cooperates with a lock rail 88 and engages the lock rail to prevent separation of the of respective connector bodies from one another. This is most likely the reason why the Examiner makes no mention of a lock tab 100 or a lock rail 88 in the Office Action, unless this is considered to be one of the "minor variations" over Flask et al., to which the applicant vehemently disagrees and takes issue with.

The Examiner calls out a first connector body 34 having a mounting slot 48 and a channel for releasably receiving the arm of the slide mechanism. The applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner in that reference numeral 34 in Flask refers to a grommet housing, and not a connector body. As delineated in column 2, lines 60-62, the first connector body 10 and the slide mechanism 12 may be assembled together and inserted into the opening 48 and received inside the grommet housing 34. Therefore, the applicant disagrees with the assertion made by the Examiner that the grommet housing 34 has a mounting slot and a channel for releasably receiving the arm of the slide mechanism, as neither is disclosed in Flask et al..

The Examiner cites Japikse, 86 USPQ 70 (CCPA 1950), and states that minor variations over Flask et al. are deemed obvious design configurations or rearrangement of parts which would obtain substantially similar results as the applicant's invention. The applicant respectfully disagrees and takes issue with the assertion that only "minor variations" are required to make the applicant's invention obvious over Flask et al.. The mere fact that a reference can be combined or modified does not render the resultant combination obvious unless the prior art also suggests desirability of the combinations. (In re Mus, 16 USPQ 2d 1430 (Fed. Cir. 1990)).

The applicant states further that not only is there no suggestion or motivation in Flask et al. to teach the applicant's invention, but rather to modify Flask et al. to arrive at the applicant's invention would "teach away" from the apparatus disclosed in Flask et al. The introduction of a third connector body in Flask et al. would go against the teaching of connecting two connector bodies 10, 14 together by a slide mechanism 12 (previously mentioned and stated in column 2, lines 30-32). The applicant quite honestly does not know what one would end up if Flask et al. were modified to incorporate a third connector body, yet alone a third connector body having a mounting tab and a lock tab, as there is also no mention, suggestion or motivation of any such concept in Flask et al.

The applicant contends that it can be only through hindsight and not through "minor variations" that one could view Flask et al. to arrive at the applicant's invention. Having not seen the applicant's invention, Flask et al. does not provide any direction, let alone suggest or motivate one to arrive at the applicant's claimed invention.

For the foregoing reasons, it is the applicant's position that the Examiner has failed to establish a prima facie case for obviousness.

Accordingly, claim 1 as originally written is believed to define patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Claim 9

In claim 9, the limitations in claims 8, 7, 6, and 1 are incorporated therein, and in addition, a lock tab slot 53 in the first connector body 12 for receiving the lock tab 100 on the second connector body 14 is claimed. When the slide mechanism 18 is in its final lock position, the lock rail 88 overlies the lock tab 100 to prevent separation of the first connector body 12 and the second connector body 14.

The applicant contends that nowhere in Flask et al. is there mention, let alone a suggestion or motivation for utilizing a lock tab slot 53 to facilitate locking connector bodies to one another. There can be no suggestion or motivation for incorporating a lock tab slot 53 in Flask et al., because there is no suggestion or motivation for incorporating a lock tab 100 in Flask et al.. This is most likely the reason why the Examiner makes no mention of a lock tab slot 53 in the Office Action, unless this is considered to be one of the "minor variations" over Flask et al., to which the applicant vehemently disagrees and takes issue with. Further, the applicant contends that it can only be through hindsight that one would be motivated to incorporate a lock tab 100 and lock tab slot 53 into Flask et al..

Accordingly, claim 9 as originally written is believed to define patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Claim 10

In claim 10, the limitations in claims 9, 8, 7, 6, and 1 are incorporated therein, and in addition, a second lock tab 101 on the second connector body 14 and a second lock tab slot 55 in the first connector body 12 for receiving the second lock tab 101 are claimed. For the reasons stated above that there is no mention, suggestion or motivation in Flask et al. to have a lock tab or a lock tab slot, the applicant contends that it can only be through hindsight that one would be motivated to incorporate a lock tab and lock tab slot into Flask et al., let alone a second lock tab and a second lock tab slot.

Accordingly, claim 10 as originally written is believed to define patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Claim 12

In claim 12, the limitations of claim 1 are incorporated therein, and in addition a second lock tab 101 on the second connector body 14 is claimed. And in assembly, the lock rail 88 overlies both lock tabs 100, 101 to prevent separation of the first connector body 12 and the second connector body 14.

For the reasons stated above that there is no mention, suggestion or motivation in Flask et al. to have a lock tab, the applicant contends that it can only be through hindsight that one would be motivated to incorporate a lock tab into Flask et al., let alone a second lock tab.

Accordingly, claim 12 as originally written is believed to define patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Claims 2-8

Each of claims 2-8 is ultimately dependent on claim 1 as originally written, and hence is believed to define patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance for at least the foregoing reasons, and such action is respectfully requested.

Claim 13

In claim 13, the applicant claims a connector assembly 10 with a first connector body 12 having a channel 20 and a mounting slot 56 and with a second connector body 14 having a lock tab 100 and a mounting tab 94 constructed to be releasably received in the mounting slot 56 of the first connector body to connect the first connector body 12 and the second connector body 14 together. A slide mechanism 18 has an arm 24 constructed to be slideably, releasably received in the channel 20 and a lock rail 88 which in assembly cooperates with the lock tab 100 to prevent separation of the second connector body 14 and the first connector body 12. For the foregoing reasons stating that claim 1 is not obvious over Flask et al., the applicant contends that claim 13, as originally written, is non-obvious over Flask et al.. In Flask et al., there is no

suggestion or motivation for one skilled in the art to glean from Flask et al. that two connector bodies be connected to one another by a slide mechanism having a lock rail 88 which in assembly cooperates with a lock tab 100 and engages the lock tab 100 to prevent separation of the two connector bodies from one another. The applicant contends that it can be only through hindsight, and not through "minor variations" that one could view Flask et al. to arrive at the applicant's invention. Having not seen the applicant's invention, Flask et al. does not provide any direction, let alone suggest or motivate one to arrive at the applicant's claimed invention..

Further, the applicant contends that if Flask et al. were modified to incorporate a slide mechanism having a lock rail and a connecting member having a lock tab to be reliably received in a mounting slot in another connector body to cooperate with the lock tab and engage the lock tab to prevent separation to the respective connector bodies, the applicant does not know what would result?

For the foregoing reasons, it is the applicant's position that the Examiner has failed to establish a prima facie case for obviousness.

Accordingly, Claim 13 as originally written is believed to define patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance and such action is respectfully requested.

Claims 14 and 15

Each of claims 14 and 15 as originally written is ultimately dependent on claim 13 and hence is believed to define patentable subject matter and to be in proper form in allowance for at least the foregoing reasons, and such action is respectfully requested.

Claim 16

In claim 16, the limitations of claims 15 and 13 are incorporated therein, and in addition a lock tab 53 in the first connector body 12 for receiving the lock tab 100 on the second connector body 14 is claimed such that when the slide mechanism 18 is in its final lock position the lock rail 88 overlies the lock tab 53 to prevent separation of the first connector body 12 and the second connector body 14.

For the reasons stated above that there is no mention, suggestion or motivation in Flask et al. to have a lock tab slot 53, the applicant contends that it can

only be through hindsight that one would be motivated to incorporate a lock tab slot 53 into Flask et al..

Accordingly, claim 16 as originally written is believed to define patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

Claim 17

In claim 17, the limitations of claims 16, 15 and 13 are incorporated therein, and in addition a second lock tab 101 on the second connector body 14 and a second lock tab slot 55 in the first connector body 12 for receiving the second lock tab 101 are claimed such that when the slide mechanism 18 is in its final lock position, the lock rail 88 overlies both lock tabs 100, 101 to prevent separation of the first connector body 12 and the second connector body 14.

For the reasons stated above that there is no mention, suggestion or motivation in Flask et al. to have a lock tab or a lock tab slot, the applicant contends that it can only be through hindsight that one would be motivated to incorporate a lock tab and lock tab slot into Flask et al., let alone a second lock tab and a second lock tab slot.

Accordingly, claim 17 as originally written is believed to define patentable subject matter and to be in proper form for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested.

It is believed that this application now is in condition for allowance. Such action is respectfully requested.

Summary

A marked-up copy of the claim amendments is attached to facilitate examination. Additions are underlined and deletions are bracketed.

If it is determined that any fees are due, the Commissioner is hereby authorized and respectfully requested to charge such fees to Deposit Account No. 50-0831.

Respectfully submitted,



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Suzanne M. Britt

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of)	
)	
LYTLE et al)	Examiner: K. Nguyen
)	
Serial No.: 09/675,038)	Group Art Unit: 2839
)	
Filed: September 28, 2000)	
)	
For: SERVICEABLE AUXILIARY)	
MOUNT)	

Marked-up Copy Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.121

Pursuant to the requirements of 37 CFR §1.121(c)(ii), the following is a marked-up copy (additions underlined and deletions bracketed) of the claim amendments being submitted in the accompanying Amendment filed herewith.

In line 10 of the second full paragraph on page 8 please delete "Fig. 6" and insert therein --Fig. 4-- as follows:

According to the preferred embodiment of the invention, a third connector body 16 may also be connected to the first connector body 12. The third connector body 16 is constructed and arranged to be releasably received in the connector slot 48 in the first connector body 12. As best shown in [Fig. 6] Fig. 4, the third connector body 16 has opposed end walls 106 and opposed front and rear walls 108, 110 extending between the end walls 106. The front and rear walls 108, 110 have bayonets 112 with a base 113, a generally cylindrical portion 114 extending outwardly and generally orthogonally from the base 113, and an enlarged, flat head 116 extending from the cylindrical portion 114 and generally parallel to the walls 108, 110. In assembly, the bayonets 112 are releasably received in the receiving slots 52 of the first connector body 12 and in the bayonet openings 80 of the slide mechanism 18.

Amend claims 11 and 18 as follows:

In the Claims

Please amend claims 11 and 18 to read as follows:

11. (Amended) A connector assembly comprising:

a slide mechanism having an arm with a lock rail and a bayonet slot in the arm;

a first connector body having a mounting slot and a channel for releasably receiving the arm of the slide mechanism;

a second connector body having a mounting tab constructed to be releasably received in the mounting slot of the first connector body to connect the first connector body and second connector body together, and a lock tab which in assembly cooperates with the lock rail and engages the lock rail to prevent separation of the second connector body and first connector body;

a third connector body having a bayonet constructed to be received in the bayonet slot of the slide mechanism so that the third connector body is releasably connected to the first connector body when the arm of the slide mechanism is disposed in the channel of the first connector body;

a receiving slot in the first connector body for releasably receiving the bayonet on the third connector body;

an opening into the bayonet slot wherein the arm of the slide mechanism is slidably movable in the channel to a preliminary position wherein the receiving slot and the opening of the bayonet slot are aligned to receive the bayonet and a final position wherein the opening of the bayonet slot is not aligned with the receiving slot;

a notch and a shoulder on the slide mechanism and a lock arm on the first connector body having a catch engageable with the notch to locate the slide mechanism in its preliminary position, and constructed to engage the shoulder to releasably maintain the slide mechanism in its final lock position;

a lock tab slot in the first connector body for receiving the lock tab on the second connector body such that when the slide mechanism is in its final lock position the lock rail overlies the lock tab to prevent separation of the first connector body and the second connector body; and

[The connector assembly of claim 9]

wherein the channel extends generally transversely to the lock tab slot so that when the arm is received in the channel, the lock rail on the slide mechanism extends generally transversely to the direction of the lock tab slot in the first connector body such that when the lock tab is fully received in the lock tab slot, movement of the second connector body in a direction tending to remove the lock tab from the lock tab slot causes the lock tab to engage the lock rail to prevent separation of the second connector body from the first connector body.

18. (Amended) A connector assembly comprising:

a first connector body having a channel and a mounting slot;

a second connector body having a lock tab and a mounting tab constructed to be releasably received in the mounting slot of the first connector body to connect the first connector body and second connector body together;

a slide mechanism having an arm constructed to be slideably, releasably received in the channel and a lock rail which in assembly cooperates with the lock tab and engages the lock tab to prevent separation of the second connector body and first connector body;

a notch on the slide mechanism and a lock arm on the first connector body having a catch engageable with the notch to locate the slide mechanism in a preliminary position, and constructed to releasably maintain the slide mechanism in a final lock position;

a lock tab slot in the first connector body for receiving the lock tab on the second connector body such that when the slide mechanism is in its final lock position the lock rail overlies the lock tab to prevent separation of the first connector body and the second connector body; and

[The connector assembly of claim 16]

wherein the channel extends generally transversely to the lock tab slot so that when the arm is received in the channel, the lock rail on the slide mechanism extends generally transversely to the direction of the lock tab slot in the first connector body such that when the lock tab is fully received in the lock tab slot, movement of the second connector body in a direction tending to remove the lock tab from the lock tab slot causes the lock tab to engage the lock rail to prevent separation of the second connector body from the first connector body.